

USAF Public Health Career Field News

Volume 1 Issue 29

December 1997

Enlisted Assignments

**It's your system.
Know it. Use it.**

The following info was copied from one of the many AFPC web sites dedicated to keeping you informed about our assignment system and personnel programs. Visit soon, and often at <http://www.afpc.af.mil>



Mac

DISCLAIMER: This area is for informational purposes only and is not to be interpreted or used as official Air Force guidance or procedure. Questions concerning the programs identified in this webpage should be directed to your servicing Military Personnel Flight or Commander's Support Staff (formerly known as the unit orderly room).

From the Chief of Airman Assignments

The most basic rule in the Assignments business is that "everyone has to be somewhere". While we say that jokingly, it's very true. You got where you are via the enlisted assignment system. You need to understand it; the better you do, the more effectively you will be able to participate in the process. We have prepared this to help you. First a little intro to set the stage--then we'll provide

some useful information on YOUR ASSIGNMENT SYSTEM.

Even after our drawdowns, there are more than 300,000 enlisted personnel in the AF. That means the Airman Assignments shop at AFPC still does a booming business. We make about 110,000 assignments and receive over 450,000 phone calls a year. Add to that an ever-increasing number of e-mails and

normal message traffic, and you can see why the 75 or so Assignment NCOs at AFPC always seem to be busy. That explains why patience and advance planning on your part will be helpful when dealing with us. We want to give every one of you the best possible service we can: accurate, thorough, polite, and professional. While we work very hard to meet your individual needs and desires, we also support supervisors, first sergeants and commanders around the world at all levels. We try to do this while staying focused on our primary goal: meeting the enlisted manning needs of the Air Force.

It is important to understand that the PCS budget plays a significant role in the assignment process. In hard budget times, the rules tighten up! When possible, we relax some of the restrictions. Many of the PCS rules are tied to legislation or are established by DoD for all the services to follow. Our job is to meet worldwide mission requirements by equally distributing the available enlisted resource. Unfortunately, even though missions seem to be expanding and OPSTEMPO is high, neither PCS dollars nor human resources are plentiful today. Finding the balance is our challenge. To do that, we fill our priority units (overseas and special category activities) first, then we distribute the remaining available people equally among stateside major commands. They, in turn, align those people to fill their greatest needs. The need to fill the overseas and "special" jobs is what drives most PCS assignments.

Most assignment actions are computer generated, but every single one is manually screened by an experienced Assignments NCO/Functional Manager to ensure validity

and equity. There is no smoke, no mirrors, no dart boards, no secret handshakes! To help you better understand YOUR ASSIGNMENT SYSTEM, we have built some general info pieces, which follow. We plan to add new items to this as appropriate. Read only the ones that pertain to you, or read them all. Not only will you be better educated, you'll also be able to help your subordinates, peers, and co-workers. It's really like any other life event: the better you understand the "system" (rules), the better you will do when it's your turn to participate. You should visit your local MPF or Commander's Support Staff if you have questions or need more specific information. If your questions are not answered by the offices above, or the topics listed below, an email response can be obtained by providing your rank, name, SSAN, AFSC, DSN phone number, and question to the specific assignment manager identified on the email listing in the topics below.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1. When I look at the EQUAL listing on the web, I see statements that talk about being "frozen"; for example, "short - - anyone who has never been on a short tour overseas is frozen as a non-volunteer" or "short - - anyone with 1 short tour or less and a return date equal to or earlier than xxxx is frozen as a non-volunteer". What does "frozen as a non-volunteer" mean?

A. Being "frozen" basically means you are "hot" (odd, huh?) for involuntary selection for overseas duty. AFPC tries to fill all overseas requirements with eligible volunteers. In some AFSCs and grades this is never a problem. Unfortunately in others we do not have enough volunteers and must move non-volunteers to meet mission needs. When this happens, to be fair, we take people in turn. For example, if we need to select a non-volunteer for a short tour and have two people eligible, one with a previous overseas tour and the other with no overseas tour credits, we would select the one who had not yet served overseas. If both members happened to have one short tour credit, we would select the one with the oldest return date. If one person had 3 previous short tours and the other only had 2, the person with the lowest number would be selected as a non-volunteer. You can see the intent here: to keep it equitable so that everyone pulls his or her fair share of overseas duty. While each grade and AFSC is different in many ways, they all share the same concept of fairness in the overseas selection process. So that you can determine approximately where you stand compared to your peers on the issue of "how close am I to getting selected as a non-volunteer for overseas?", a "freeze date", or vulnerability date, is built

for each grade and AFSC each cycle. You compare your individual situation to the freeze date to determine if you are "hot". If you are, you might want to consider volunteering for something you see on the current EQUAL list, rather than taking your chances with what might pop up next time around when you will be even "hotter". Remember, we take volunteers first and only go to the non-volunteer list when absolutely necessary.

Q2. Do I have an assignment?

A. Assignment notification is a commander's role. Once assignments are made, we send them to the MPF and unit commanders are advised. You will be notified shortly thereafter. The release dates for each cycle's assignments are published each quarter. Contact your MPF and/or Commander's Support Staff for the latest assignment information.

Q3. Can you verify my volunteer status and preference?

A. Most MPFs can verify this as they are now directly connected to the AFPC computer.

Q4. What is open overseas?

A. Under the Enlisted Quarterly Assignments Listing (EQUAL) process, we list the assignments we will match during the next cycle. This list is sent to MPFs approximately four weeks before the match is made. You can review the list and update your preferences if you would like to volunteer for any of the advertised requirements. Freeze date or "vulnerability" columns are included on the EQUAL listing for overseas requirements. The dates are AFSC and grade specific and reflect both long and short tour vulnerability. The long tour date shows Overseas Duty Selection Date (ODSD) and the short tour date shows both the Short Tour Return Date (STRD) and the # of previous short tours. If your dates are on or before the dates shown and the number of short tours are equal or less than the number shown, you are vulnerable for selection as a non-volunteer. Use ONLY your current grade (NOT one grade up or one grade down) unless you're projected for promotion. If you're projected for promotion, use your projected grade ONLY. A1Cs will volunteer based on DOR, promotion eligibility, and skill level as identified on the EQUAL coverpage. For additional instructions on how to volunteer for assignments see the EQUAL and EQUAL Plus coverpages.

Q5. What is the status of my follow-on, in-place base-of-preference, or other assignment application?

A. These programs are run at different times of the quarter based on various parameters (i.e., homebasing/follow-on applications are processed 120 days prior to projected departure date). MPFs may submit queries regarding home-basing/follow-on applications when departure date is within 90 days and the application was submitted over 30 days ago.

Q6. As a military couple returning from overseas, why can't we compete for CONUS assignments advertised on the EQUAL list?

A. The key word is compete. The overseas returnee assignment process is designed to be fair & equitable by using factors such as the current type of overseas tour you are on, the number of previous short tours you have had, your DOR, etc., to establish a "pecking order" that racks & stacks overseas returnees for each AFSC by grade. In other words, if there were 5 Supply (2S0X1) SSgts returning in a given EQUAL cycle, the above factors would be used to actually prioritize those 5 SSgts, ranking them 1 through 5; then these 5 SSgts would compete (not pick & choose) for the available assignments. In the military couple situation, although there are 2 people, there is only 1 family, and our goal is to keep the family together if at all possible. Moreover, in a military couple's situation, the military members may have different AFSCs or different grades/skill levels from one another. So if we tried to include the military couple in the "pecking order", one member might be #1 in their Grade/AFSC, but their spouse might rank #5 in their Grade/AFSC. There's just no way to include military couples in the EQUAL returnee process and maintain both our goal of keeping the family together and equity for other returnees who are not part of a military couple. Based on this, we have found that "hand matching" these assignments is the best & fairest method.

Q7. As an overseas returnee, why can't I get more notification time for my CONUS assignment?

A. As an overseas returnee, your assignment process actually begins when you sign your DEROS RIP to indicate you wish to keep your DEROS & not extend nor do an in-place COT (IPCOT). Once we know you are a firm loss from the overseas location, the ball starts rolling for us to determine how many overseas assignments we need to make, i.e., replacements for you and others returning during your three month cycle. Once that's done, we advertise those assignments on the Overseas EQUAL list, then match the most eligible people to those assignments. So in other words, we need

to first find out who your replacement is & more importantly where is he/she coming from before we can determine the CONUS assignments and in turn advertise them on the CONUS EQUAL list. This process is all computerized, that's the good news; the bad news is that it is a very time consuming process because of the "old" computer hardware/software being used and the timelines are at the maximum levels now with no flexibility for change under the current computer platform. However, the entire Personnel System (not just assignments) is undergoing a multi-year/multi million dollar modernization/upgrade effort that will eventually allow us to adjust the timelines. Bottom line, we will be providing more notification time for overseas returnees (probably 4-6 weeks more), but our ability to do so is still a couple of years from implementation. In the meantime, we have to live with the stringent timelines of the current system.

Q8. If I am in the overseas area and desire a Consecutive Overseas Tour (COT), how do I know what requirements to volunteer for on the EQUAL listing ?

A. Individuals with an indefinite DEROS are eligible for a consecutive overseas tour (COT) anytime after completing their original tour. Individuals with an established DEROS can also be considered for a COT but can only volunteer for advertised requirements with a reporting date (RNLTD) equal to their DEROS month or the following two months. For example, assuming you have not already entered the overseas return cycle and your DEROS is Jan, you are eligible to compete for assignments with a Jan, Feb, or Mar reporting. You must also meet the eligibility requirements as outlined in AFI 36-2110.

Q9. How do I stand for overseas selection? What is my number on the volunteer/nonvolunteer overseas list?

A. Eligibility for overseas listings are maintained by individual assignment NCOs. Relative standing changes daily due to factors such as number of volunteers, available assignments, people entering or leaving the eligible pool (assignments, promotions, retirements, separations, retraining), authorization changes, etc. Therefore, numerical standing by itself is useless data without an understanding of those factors and knowledge of future overseas requirements. Because of that, we do not provide this information in specific terms. However, you can find your approximate vulnerability by checking the freeze dates for your grade and AFSC on the overseas EQUAL listing. This will help you decide if you are "hot" for overseas and, armed with that info, you can more

effectively participate in the assignment process. There are a few AFSCs that do not receive assignments under EQUAL (i.e. 1AXXX). Please review the EQUAL list cover page for specifics.

Q10. What is an Imbalanced AFSC (IAFSC) and can I find out if I have one?

A. An imbalanced AFSC is a specialty in which we have a significantly higher number of requirements overseas than we do in the CONUS. If you have two or more awarded AFSCs and one is or becomes imbalanced, and you are selected for overseas duty, it will be in the imbalanced AFSC. Additionally, to meet overseas requirements, those retraining into an imbalanced skill will not be deferred from reassignment and may be selected for overseas assignment as soon as they are awarded a three skill level in the retraining specialty. On the other hand, if you are retraining from an imbalanced AFSC, you will usually be deferred from overseas assignment for two years from completion of the formal training that awarded the 3 skill level AFSC. You can find out if your AFSC is imbalanced by reviewing the Air Force Retraining Advisory which is maintained by the Personnel Employment Element in your MPF. You can also usually find a copy of it in the Customer Service Element. Imbalanced AFSCs are identified with an asterisk (*) on the overseas EQUAL.

Q11. I have recently been selected for an assignment to XYZ AFB. Is there a site on the World Wide Web where I can find information on my new base?

A. As a matter of fact there is information on the world wide web where you can find information on your new assignment. It's a site called FAMNET Crossroads. Right now, this site is providing a "one-stop" approach to getting information on just about every major military installation. Once at the desired location you will find additional links that provide local-area information on the community, relocation services, housing information, medical and dental services, and support services, to name a few. It's a promising new website under construction and definitely worth looking into. The address for FAMNET Crossroads is:
<http://www.famnet.com>

Assignments Inquiry Section

This office gives our customers yet another link to AFPC. While most of your questions can be answered by your MPF or Commander's Support Staff, you can call or write us at any time if you need further information or have

been unable to get your questions answered locally. If you call the Inquiry line, please be prepared to listen to a short recording which we have designed to answer the most common call-in questions received. The Inquiry Section also responds to personal letters received requesting information on enlisted assignments. You may call us at DSN 487-2111, Commercial (210) 652-2111, or write us at:

HQ AFPC/DPAAS2, 550 C Street West Suite 29,
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4371

Please be sure to include your Social Security Number and duty phone number when you write. This will help us in getting the information necessary to answer your questions and contact you.

Assignment Distribution System

The Assignment Distribution System was developed to distribute personnel equitably among commands. Further distribution to specific units is done jointly by major command personnel staffs and AFPC assignment NCOs. Distribution is accomplished using computer programs in conjunction with the policies contained in AFI 36-2110 (Assignments). While the computer plays an important role in the process, every assignment is still manually reviewed by AFPC assignment personnel to ensure accuracy and equity.

Overseas and overseas return assignments are done in three month cycles. It all begins with allocations without names being provided to the major commands based on their entitlements. Entitlements are determined by Air Force wide manning in an AFSC. The major commands review the allocations to ensure distribution is consistent with AF priorities and determine the specific base of assignment. Requirements are advertised through numerous channels (i.e. EQUAL list, AF Times, Worldwide web, etc.). You can volunteer and update your preferences through the military personnel flight (MPF) or the Commander's Support Staff (CSS). **TIMING IS EVERYTHING!!** Don't miss an opportunity because you didn't do what you needed to do on time. Since the timeline is short, immediate action on your part is key to successful participation in this process. Based on your choices and your relative priority among those in the same grade and AFSC, names are matched to the bases. The actual assignments then flow to the MPFs and to your commander for official notification.

Graduates from basic military training (BMT) are provided assignments on a weekly basis, as are most

graduates from technical training (TTGs). Assignments are provided to the CONUS as well as overseas and are provided equitably among the commands. Individual preferences are considered to the fullest extent possible.

There are numerous special programs designed to support individuals needs. Some of these are: voluntary stabilized base assignment program (VSBAP), voluntary enlisted CONUS assignment program (VECAP), base of preference (BOP), permissive assignments, join spouse, etc. General information can be found at this site. More specific information on each can be obtained at your MPF or CSS.

Our assignment system is unique and its primary focus is on the needs of the Air Force first, then on assignment equity, and finally, on individual preference considerations. When all three come together, we have a "match made in heaven." The next two topics provide visibility into the actual workings of the assignment system.

Enlisted Quarterly Assignments Listing (EQUAL)

EQUAL is the assignment listing which advertises most of our enlisted assignments which are sending people overseas and providing CONUS assignments for overseas returnees. These assignments are advertised and matched eight times a year (four cycles each for those going to and from the overseas area). The listing tells you what is available by AFSC, grade, and location. It allows you to align your preferences to actual Air Force needs. EQUAL listings may be viewed at your MPF, with your Commander's Support Staff, or on AFPC's World WideWeb page: (<http://www.afpc.af.mil/asnment/htdocs/enljobs.htm>).

CONUS members are eligible for reassignment to overseas locations when they have completed the required time on station (TOS). The normal TOS requirement for overseas assignment is 12 months for first-term airmen and 24 months for career airmen. In addition to TOS requirements, members must meet established quality control criteria for reassignment (not under Article 15 punishment, not on the Control Roster, not in Drug/Alcohol rehabilitation, no rating of 2 or lower on latest EPR, etc.). You also need to be eligible to obtain the required retainability for the assignment you are volunteering for. For example, you are a married TSgt nearing your high year of tenure and are only able to get 36 months of retainability (you only have 36 months after the RNLTD of the advertised requirement, before you retire) and you see a requirement for Yokota

AB on EQUAL for your AFSC and grade. You know that if you volunteer as an extended tour volunteer you have a higher priority than a standard tour volunteer. But guess what? You can't be an extended tour volunteer because you can't obtain the required 48 months of retainability and the computer would not select you. So to be properly considered for this Yokota requirement, you would need to volunteer for the standard tour length of 36 months.

Overseas members with an indefinite DEROS are eligible for a consecutive overseas tour (COT) anytime after completing their original tour. Individuals with an established DEROS can also be considered for a COT but can only volunteer for advertised requirements with a reporting date (RNLTD) equal to your DEROS month or the following two months. For example, if your DEROS is Jan, you are eligible to compete for assignments with Jan, Feb, or Mar reporting. You must meet the eligibility requirements as outlined in AFI 36-2110.

If you are not selected for a COT assignment or didn't volunteer because you want to return to the CONUS, you will compete for a CONUS assignment during your overseas return cycle. You must have 12 months retainability after DEROS to be considered for a return assignment. You only need 7-12 months if you're on a short tour where the accompanied tour is not authorized, and high year of tenure restricted from getting the full 12 months. If you do not have or obtain the required retainability by the required date, your DEROS will be involuntarily extended to match your DOS. For answers to questions or other specific information on retainability issues, contact your local MPF or Commander's Support Staff.

Military personnel married to military personnel DO NOT use the overseas returnee EQUAL list. AF couples DO use the overseas EQUAL listing to apply for overseas assignments, including COTs. For more information, see the Join Spouse Program topic.

Enlisted Quarterly Assignments Listing - Plus (EQUAL-Plus))

This program was established 1 Oct 93 and is available in the MPF (customer service), Commander's Support Staff, or on the AFPC Web page (<http://www.afpc.af.mil/asnment/htdocs/enljobs.htm>). The EQUAL-Plus listings are updated on a weekly basis and are arranged by grade and AFSC.). EQUAL-Plus was designed to supplement EQUAL by advertising special assignments (i.e., joint and departmental service requirements, special duties, 1AXXX assignments, and

all chief master sergeant assignments). EQUAL-Plus shows upcoming requirements, any special qualifications a person needs to be eligible for selection, the available locations, reporting instructions, and POCs for additional information.

EQUAL-Plus also advertises MAJCOM/AFPC controlled special duties (i.e., instructor duty, recruiting duty, duty with the Thunderbirds, postal duty, Air Staff/MAJCOM positions, and defense attaché duties around the world), and short notice overseas assignments.

Assignment of Airmen Involved in Drug/Alcohol Abuse

Airmen involved in drug abuse are normally not retained in the Air Force. The Air Force will attempt to restore to duty those persons with problems attributable to alcohol abuse and provide transitional counseling to those pending separation who cannot and will not be restored to normal duty. Individuals entered into either Track IV or V (excluding aftercare) of the Substance Abuse Reorientation and Treatment (SART) Program are ineligible for reassignment. Those successfully completing alcohol rehabilitation, who are removed from the SART, may be reassigned unless the commander is considering administrative or disciplinary action (i.e. discharge or court-martial). There are, however, a few situations that would make these individuals ineligible for particular assignments:

- those requiring an SCI clearance
- those selected for a PRP position--if a confirmed drug user
- those being considered for disciplinary action (i.e. discharge, court-martial)
- those ineligible for special assignments listed in the SPECAT guide

First Sergeant Duty

First Sergeants are selected through two methods; The Commander's Identification Option Program and by retraining.

The Commander's Identification Option Program was established to aid commanders in filling local vacancies in a timely manner. It allows the commander to select from within his/her unit when a replacement is not identified within 90 days of the incumbent's departure. The individual must be a volunteer, in the grade of MSgt, approved by the local First Sergeant Selection Board, and be recommended by the MAJCOM Senior Enlisted Advisor, and releasable from their current AFSC.

Selectees are required to attend the First Sergeant Academy and receive a two year in-place stabilized tour.

The retraining program was established to encourage highly qualified MSgts to retrain into the First Sergeant Career Field. To further encourage participation, members are provided a base of choice (includes CONUS and overseas long-tour areas) and a two year deferment from reassignment if in the CONUS. The basic eligibility is determined through the local First Sergeant Selection Boards (see AFI 36-2130 for details). The assignment request is considered by AFPC upon receipt of retraining applications from the base/MAJCOM. If requested base is not available, the member may withdraw his/her application. Individuals applying who are currently on the Chronically Critical Skills list should understand their application may not be approved due to overall manning (all grades), not just the manning in a given grade.

Enlisted Joint/Departmental Assignments and Enlisted PME Instructors

The Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) manages over 11,000 special duty assignments (SDA) for various agencies such as the White House, SECDEF, SECDEF, Defense Intelligence Agency, Defense Nuclear Agency, NATO, Defense Attaches, and Enlisted PME Instructors. These requirements are usually advertised through EQUAL-Plus and filled by application. Joint Departmental agencies have "requisition authority" and receive 100 percent manning. Requisitions are usually initiated 12 months in advance of reporting date to allow sufficient time for processing security clearance requirements, schedule training, and meet other assignment requirements. Volunteers apply through their MPF or CSS. If there are no qualified volunteers, AFPC selects non-volunteers to fill these demanding positions. Selections to fill these positions are worked by AFPC/DPAAD6 in coordination with the functional manager and assignment NCO for the specific AFSC needed. If we must take a non-volunteer, the selection is based on a determination of the most "eligible and qualified" individual.

Individuals may apply for enlisted PME instructor duty through their MPF or CSS. Applications are mailed directly to the school where you desire duty. The school notifies their MAJCOM of their desire to hire the individual; the MAJCOM reviews the request and, if they concur, forwards a request for reassignment to AFPC. AFPC reviews the request, determines

eligibility/availability of the individual, and if otherwise eligible, approves the assignment.

Humanitarian Reassignment and Deferment Program

This program is designed to provide stability to airmen who have problems more severe than those normally encountered by other Air Force members. The problem must be able to be resolved within a reasonable period of time (usually 12-18 months, or in a case of a terminal illness, 24 months). For approval, a vacancy must exist at the requested duty location if PCS is required.

Circumstances which normally warrant approval are:

- recent death of spouse or child
- spouse abandons children while member is serving an unaccompanied tour overseas;
- authorized state or local agency places the child into home for adoption purposes and deferment is necessary to comply with state laws to complete the adoption
- a family advocacy problem exists
- a serious financial problem exists, not a result of the member's over-extension of personal income (natural disaster, fire, and theft, are examples of what might qualify)

Circumstances which normally warrant disapproval are:

- a threatened separation/divorce action
psychoneurosis of a family member incident to family separation
- a housing shortage or home ownership problem
- financial problems resulting from member's over-extension of personal income to include bankruptcy
- climatic conditions or geographic locations adversely affecting health of a family member (exception: when the condition is clearly life threatening)
- financial or management problem related to off-duty employment, spouse's employment, or private business activities
- sole parent's desire to make or facilitate either short or long term child care arrangements
- normal pregnancy, threatened miscarriage, breech birth, or cesarean section
- passport or visa problems involving newly acquired dependents in the overseas area

Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)

EFMP allows the assignment of airmen to valid manning requirements where suitable medical, educational, or other resources are available to treat the family member.

It provides special assignment consideration to AF members who have a spouse, child, or dependent adult with medical conditions requiring prolonged hospitalization or out-patient treatment.

The initial reassignment or deferment is to establish a treatment program. If subsequently selected for a CONUS assignment, the local EFMP officer verifies availability of adequate facilities to meet the family member's needs. If unavailable, the member requests assignment be changed to a location where appropriate care is available for the dependent.

If subsequently selected for a long-tour overseas location, regardless of volunteer status, and dependent travel is delayed due to a lack of special educational services (SES) or medically related services (MRS), AFPC can provide a diversion to a MAJCOM/SG pinpointed location. If a pinpointed assignment cannot be provided, then the assignment may be canceled.

If subsequently selected for long-tour overseas location as a non-volunteer where adequate general medical services (GMS) do not exist, the member may apply for short tour to avoid disrupting EFMP and minimize family separation. If no short-tour requirements exist, member must serve the all-others tour length. Member can request an assignment back to the same location upon return from overseas to continue as a volunteer to exchange assignments. Once approved, the participating individuals pay for all expenses involved and travel time is charged as leave. See the CONUS assignment exchange topic for additional information.

Base of Preference (BOP)

This program authorizes a BOP for first-term airmen in conjunction with the Career Airman Reenlistment Reservation System (CAREERS) retraining, or an in-place BOP for career airmen or first-term airmen not retraining under CAREERS.

First-term airmen are afforded the opportunity to apply for a BOP in conjunction with CAREERS retraining. Career airmen may submit an in-place BOP application after completing three years, five months on station. First-term airmen not retraining under CAREERS may also apply after completing 17 months on station. (Note: consecutive in-place BOPs are not authorized.)

The key factors you must know are:

- member's vulnerability for overseas selection is a determining factor in approving/disapproving in-place BOP requests -- know your vulnerability!
- all approvals result in a 2-year assignment deferment

CONUS Assignment Exchange

The CONUS assignment exchange is a type of permissive reassignment for which the member pays all expenses involved and travel time is charged as leave. These assignments require two years service retainability.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for this program you must meet the following criteria:

- You must be the same grade and skill level, and if applicable, hold the same special experience identifier (SEI) as the airman with whom the exchange is desired
- You can request a waiver of ODS/STRD if vulnerable for overseas
- First-term airmen must have two years TOS
- Career airmen must have at least three years TOS

Application procedures

- It is up to you to "find" another airman at another CONUS base willing to exchange assignments
- Your MPF will counsel you on eligibility and can assist in the application process
- Apply through your squadron commander. If your commander recommends approval, application is sent to the squadron commander of the other airman involved in the exchange
- If both commanders recommend approval, the MPF servicing the member whose last name starts with the letter closest to "A" is responsible for processing the request in-system to the appropriate resource manager at AFPC/DPAAD

Other factors

- This program is not for military couples; other programs are more appropriate
- Once the request is approved by AFPC, you must normally continue on assignment even if you change your mind, so **BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR**
- Individuals may request release from reassignment if a valid hardship or humanitarian condition develops after approval

Join Spouse Program

What is a join spouse couple? It's essentially an active duty military member married to another active duty military member. Air Force policy is to assign military couples together, when possible, to a location where they can live in the same residence. Remember, each member is serving in his or her own right and must fulfill the obligations expected of all Air Force personnel. Because the Air Force cannot guarantee military couples will be reassigned together, you should take all necessary steps to reduce the impact of a separation should it occur. Understanding the Join Spouse Program and applying it correctly is essential in preventing self imposed family separations. Here is a brief overview of the various aspects of the Join Spouse Program:

How to apply

Married military couples are required to complete the AF Form 1048 (Military Spouse Information). This form lets AFPC know what your intentions/desires as a couple are. It tells us whether you do or do not want to be reassigned together. If you do want joint assignments, we will do everything reasonable to accommodate your desires in most situations. While your join-spouse-intent-code might tell us you want to be assigned together, there are some situations where it will be necessary for you to also formally apply for join spouse consideration. The situations that require formal application are:

- Air Force members married to active duty members of another branch of service
- Members who marry while assigned to different locations
- Marriages that occur after one member has an assignment

It is very important for AF members who marry while proceeding to different assignment locations to contact the nearest Air Force installation. They should submit an application for Join Spouse assignment before arriving at their new duty location. This is important for the military couple because it allows AFPC to consider the join spouse application and possibly issue instructions for a change in assignment.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for a join spouse assignment you must meet the following criteria:

- You must have 24 months time on station for a funded move (CONUS to CONUS and to OS) or 12 months for a

permissive move (within the CONUS or OS-to-OS within the same theater)

- Permissive moves from CONUS-to-OS and OS-to-CONUS are not authorized
- You must be able to obtain 24 months retainability from the reporting date for a CONUS-to-CONUS move
- When assigned to the same or adjacent overseas location, you must serve the accompanied by dependents tour length
- Both members must be serving on extended active duty in one of the US military services. This does not include reserve members on active duty for less than 12 months
- You cannot be pending separation or retirement within 12 months from the date you will be joined

Guidelines for approval and disapproval

When considering approval of a join spouse application, AFPC uses established guidelines. These guidelines ensure equal consideration of all requests. In order for us to approve a request, a requirement, not just a vacancy, must exist at the desired location. What's the difference between a vacancy and a requirement? A base may have an empty or vacant position available, but it might not be a requirement. We rely on a process that identifies which empty positions are required to be filled. Once an empty position has been identified as needing to be filled, it is called a requirement. Sometimes, there are vacancies that are not requirements and therefore, will not be filled. The next guideline for approval is that the member and his or her spouse must meet all eligibility criteria. Be aware that join spouse assignments are not permitted in conjunction with any Base of Preference (BOP) reassignment program. In the event a member's AFSC cannot be used at the spouse's location, he or she may apply for retraining if otherwise eligible.

If you voluntarily request cancellation of a join spouse assignment or self-initiate a reassignment to a location other than where your military spouse is, you have told AFPC that you don't want to be assigned with your spouse. As a result, you may be separated from your spouse and won't be eligible for further consideration to your spouse's location..... **BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR** . While your spouse may be able to subsequently request an assignment to your location, such a reassignment would not be under the join spouse rules and, depending upon the circumstances at the time, could be a long shot at best. The AF will try to keep you together, but you have a key role in the success of this program.

As a military couple you are not authorized to be jointly assigned to overseas locations where government approved accompanied housing is not available. For example, if both you and your spouse were selected for assignment to Kunsan AB South Korea, you should immediately advise your MPF so corrective actions can be taken. In such a case, we would, depending upon the circumstances, attempt to find a different short tour during the same time frame for one of the members. This is especially important for couples who get married after being selected for an assignment. (If, by chance, you do end up at the same short tour location, one of you will be "continued" on to a different location. Obviously, it would be better to have this all settled up front rather than after you arrive at the "wrong" location). Military couples who are married in the overseas area while currently serving on a dependent restricted tour (such as Kunsan AB), may continue to serve in their own right and DEROS upon completion of the tour. Additionally, they can request to extend to match their spouse's DEROS so they can depart at the same time.

Voluntary Stabilized Base Assignment Program (VSBAP)

This program is designed to offer members the option to volunteer for certain CONUS bases that have had a historically high turnover rate. The benefit for the volunteer is a stabilized tour of either 4 or 5 years depending on the location. The eligible locations under this program are Grand Forks AFB ND, Minot AFB ND, and Los Angeles AFS CA (including Fort Mac Arthur). Members selected for Grand Forks or Minot under this program will serve five years; those selected for Los Angeles AFS will serve four years.

Eligibility criteria

This program is open to all airmen including enlisted couples (a requirement must exist for you and your spouse). You must meet quality control standards and, if in the CONUS, have at least 2 years, 5 months on station to apply for VSBAP. If your request is approved, you will not be able to actually move until you have at least 36 months on station. Overseas airmen apply during their DEROS forecast process (12 - 8 months prior to DEROS). You need at least 24 months retainability before departing your current base. If you already have an assignment or have some other assignment application pending, you are not eligible to apply for this program.

How to apply for VSBAP

If you want to apply for a VSBAP assignment, you should contact your MPF for assistance. They will provide you with the application information. After you have completed the required actions and returned your application to the MPF, your request will be updated in the personnel data system. Once it's received by AFPC, approval will depend on the projected manning levels at the requested location. Requests for consecutive in-place VSBAP tours are not authorized.

Assignment of Non-CONUS Residents

This program provides special consideration to non-CONUS residents to be assigned to their home area. There are four locations which currently receive this consideration: Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and Panama (Canal Zone - if enlisted before 1 Oct 79).

To be eligible, first-term airmen must complete 12 months time-on-station (TOS) and career airmen must have 24 months TOS at their present base. If overseas, the member must complete the tour and in all cases the member must obtain sufficient retainability to serve the accompanied or unaccompanied tour as applicable.

Members apply by updating their preference for their resident country or state. The member continues to be eligible for selection to other overseas locations (both as a volunteer and non-volunteer) the same as other personnel. The individual receives a higher priority of selection among other standard tour volunteers to their resident location. If selected for the assignment to your home area, it counts as overseas service and a DEROS will be established, just as it is for other airmen.

CONUS Assignment SWAP Program

The CONUS assignment SWAP program was created to allow overseas returnees to swap their assignments with other airmen returning to the CONUS.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for this program, the DEROS of both members must be in the same overseas returnee cycle. Your grade or projected grade and control AFSC must be the same as the member you'd like to swap with. If either assignment requires a special experience identifier (SEI), both members must possess it. Only personnel in the grade of TSgt and below may apply. Individuals selected for a consecutive overseas tour or to a selectively manned activity are not eligible to apply.

How to apply for a CONUS Assignment SWAP

If interested, you should request an assignment SWAP immediately after receiving your assignment. This is done through your MPF. Once you provide the bases, locales, states, or areas you are interested in, the MPF will update them into the personnel data system. At AFPC, your request is included into a computer search that is accomplished in an effort to match your request with other airmen who desire a SWAP. Remember, to be approved, everything must match up between you and the other enlisted member. You will be notified of approval or disapproval approximately 60 days before your DEROS.

Date Eligible to Return from Overseas (DEROS) Forecast System (DFS)

The DEROS Forecast System was implemented as an effort to save PCS funds and improve the management of the DEROS program. In this section, we briefly address the indefinite DEROS, in-place consecutive overseas tours (IPCOT), and consecutive overseas tours.

For those serving long tours in Alaska and Hawaii, an indefinite DEROS is automatically provided. If you elected to maintain your indefinite DEROS during your DEROS forecast option opportunity, but would now like to establish a DEROS, you may do so provided you choose a date 12-15 months in the future. (Your commander can adjust this period of time from 9 to 15 months.) For all other locations, requesting an indefinite DEROS is an option to be considered during your DEROS forecast process.

The in-place consecutive overseas tour (IPCOT) is another available option for all individuals at an overseas location. By applying for this program, you agree to serve an equal or longer tour than the one you are currently serving, at the same location. If your request is approved, you (and any command sponsored dependents) are entitled to COT leave travel. The effective date of your IPCOT will be on the completion of your original tour and any voluntary extension of tour (EOT).

If you are currently overseas and want to volunteer for a specific overseas base or country, the consecutive overseas tour (COT) program is the one for you. Those members serving with an indefinite DEROS will receive continuous consideration for overseas requirements, if they are a consecutive overseas tour (COT) volunteer and have completed their current tour. Members who have an established DEROS can also be ended tour length. By

volunteering for the extended tour option, you agree to serve the standard tour length plus an additional 12 months. The advantage of being an extended tour volunteer is that you receive assignment consideration ahead of those members who only volunteer for the standard tour length. Here's an example. Let's say SSgt Nickel volunteered for Ramstein AB Germany as a standard tour volunteer and SSgt Dollar volunteered for the same base but for the extended tour. Assuming other things were equal (AFSC, grade, TOS, no quality factors, etc.) and both are eligible for the assignment, SSgt Dollar would be selected for the assignment. Why? He has agreed to serve an additional year in the overseas area, which will save the Air Force PCS funds.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for an overseas assignment, you **MUST** have or be able to obtain, the retainability for the tour for which you are volunteering. For example, you have a HYT that is 28 months away and you volunteer for a 36 month tour. You won't get selected because you cannot obtain the full 36 months of retainability for the assignment. If you are a second term or career airmen (not a first-termer), and are selected and then decline to get the required retainability, your assignment will be canceled and you will be required to separate or retire on your current DOS. (If you are already retirement eligible you may only be able to stay in six months from the time you refuse the assignment). If you do decline an assignment or have one canceled because of your unwillingness to obtain sufficient retainability, you will be ineligible for other assignments, except those for which you have the needed retainability. You can volunteer for overseas tours at your Commander's Support Staff (CSS) or MPF by completing the Air Force Form 392 or through PC III. Please note: If you have more than one AFSC and one is imbalanced, you will be selected in the imbalanced AFSC only. For more information on imbalanced AFSCs, see your MPF.

Overseas Tour Extension Incentive Program (OTEIP)

OTEIP is yet another DEROS forecast option available for those eligible personnel in the overseas area. It provides special incentives for airmen, in certain AFSCs and at certain locations, to extend their overseas tour for 12 months. The OTEIP incentives are:

- \$80 per month special pay or
- 30 days non-chargeable leave or
- 15 days of non-chargeable leave and round trip transportation at government expense from the overseas

location to the nearest CONUS port (for military member only)

Eligibility criteria

You are eligible for this program if you're serving in any AFSC at a short tour location, or a specific AFSC at a long tour location as designated by the Secretary of the Air Force. Your MPF has a listing of the eligible AFSCs and locations. You must agree to serve a 12 month extension of your current tour. Airmen can only apply for one incentive and once they apply, cannot change their incentive option. Once requested, the extension is reviewed by the local commander, MAJCOM, and AFPC. Any of those reviewers can disapprove your request for any of the following reasons: quality control, a projected change in authorizations, or projected over-manning. If you have an approved extension, you are not usually reassigned during the period of extension.

Home-Basing and Follow-On Assignment Program

This program allows airmen selected for a short tour, dependent restricted or elect to serve the unaccompanied tour length (less than 18 months), to apply for advanced assignment consideration prior to departing for that short tour. Home-Basing (HB) assignments permit return to Alaska, Hawaii, or the same CONUS base they left before going on the short tour. The Follow-On (FO) assignment program provides for advanced consideration of a CONUS assignment (not HB) or an overseas tour for the member's PCS upon completion of the short tour. There is one exception. If you are currently serving on a long tour (except in Alaska or Hawaii) or an accompanied short tour, you can only apply for a follow-on to a CONUS location or a long tour location in Alaska or Hawaii.

You should apply for your HB or FO assignment within 15 days after your initial relocation briefing. This is a "one time shot" and you should carefully consider your choices. We will do everything reasonable to finalize your next-after-remote assignment to one of your preferences. You can apply for specific bases, states, regions, or countries. The more choices you give us, the more likely we are to be able to approve one of them. If your AFSC is not authorized at a certain base (see your MPF for a listing indicating the AFSCs at each installation), don't waste a valuable choice by listing it. We will only be able to approve those HB/FO requests when we can determine that a requirement exists in your grade and AFSC at the time you will be available (essentially, your DEROS month + 60 days). This must

be accomplished BEFORE you leave your current station. As always: BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR . After you apply for a HB or FO assignment, the Personnel Data System is programmed to store your application at AFPC until the fourth month prior to your projected departure date. At this time, AFPC attempts to provide you a HB or FO assignment. While this may seem like an easy task, please understand that we are looking at manning requirements 15 months or more into the future and manning levels can change for any number of reasons. After we review your request for the HB or FO assignment, we forward the approval or disapproval decision to the MPF and they will notify you. If your HB or FO is approved, you can plan accordingly. If it is disapproved, your "next" assignment will be handled under the EQUAL overseas returnee process (unless you are a military spouse couple) and you will be notified of your onward assignment approximately 3 to 5 months prior to your DEROS. If you are approved for a FO assignment, you must obtain the retainability for it within 30 days after approval. If you are approved for a HB assignment, you can obtain the necessary retainability when you receive your overseas returnee counseling. Your dependents may remain at the current duty location or you may relocate them/household goods at your own expense without losing the HB/FO assignment. With an approved follow-on assignment you may relocate your family or household goods to the new duty station at government expense.

Other factors

There are several other factors concerning the HB and FO program you should be aware of. As with any personnel program, if you have any questions or concerns, you should consult with your MPF for further details.

- Airmen who receive an approved assignment are not eligible to request an indefinite DEROS or voluntarily extend overseas for more than three months unless they voluntarily cancel their HB or FO assignment
- Approved assignments may be canceled if a member moves dependents or household goods to a location other than the follow-on assignment, unless they were moved at your own expense
- Approved assignments may be involuntarily changed or canceled due to changing requirements and priorities (base closure, loss of authorizations, etc.). Affected airmen are given priority for other assignment preferences and special handling is provided

- You may be eligible to ship a privately owned vehicle (POV) at government expense to the OS location. (Check with your MPF)
- Single members, single member parents, and military couples who will serve concurrent, unaccompanied short tours, can store household goods at government expense (check with your local TMO) and relocate their dependents to a designated location at their own expense without cancellation of a HB or FO assignment

Voluntary Enlisted CONUS Assignment Program (VECAP)

The voluntary enlisted CONUS assignment program (VECAP) is a CONUS-wide assignment program which allows airmen to volunteer for any CONUS base for PCS after completing 6 years at their current duty station. You can submit a VECAP application upon completion of 5 years and 5 months time on station. Your application may contain as many as eight CONUS bases or locales. VECAP applications are considered by AFPC once a quarter, after each overseas returnee cycle.

Other factors

Here are some other requirements for VECAP assignments

- You must meet quality control standards
- You must be recommended by your commander
- You must not have already been selected for another assignment
- You apply by letter using the format in AFI 36-2110, Attachment 13 (your MPF can help)
- Required to obtain same amount of retainability as any other CONUS to CONUS (24 months) move
- Losing manning is not a factor, however, overseas vulnerability is considered and is a valid reason for disapproval
- Must be a valid requirement at gaining location based on AFSC's CONUS average
- If a joint spouse couple applies, both must meet all eligibility requirements and apply at the same time to be considered for joint VECAP assignments

Overseas Tour Selection Priority

When we select Air Force members for overseas assignments, there are predetermined priorities for selection. This prioritization begins by categorizing certain groups of eligible personnel. Understand too, that there are additional priorities within these groups as well. The information provided below outlines the basic

priorities used and are in priority sequence. Notice the priority steps apply to those individuals eligible to be selected for an overseas assignment and are prioritized based on the greatest possible PCS cost savings. If the information is unclear or if you need more information, contact your MPF or Commander's Support Staff for assistance.

These are the primary short tour selection priorities:

1. In-place consecutive overseas tour (IPCOT) volunteers
2. Consecutive overseas tour (COT) volunteers
3. Volunteers in the CONUS in a mandatory PCS move situation. (Mandatory move is defined as PCSs resulting from base closures, completion of or elimination from training, completion of a CONUS maximum stabilized tour, an overseas tour, unit move, or being surplus on a base or installation.)
4. Non-volunteers in the CONUS in a mandatory PCS move situation that are vulnerable for involuntary overseas PCS selection within 24 months.
5. Volunteers in the CONUS
6. Non-volunteers in the CONUS

These are the primary long tour selection priorities:

1. IPCOT volunteers for extended tours
2. IPCOT, non-CONUS resident (NCR) volunteers for a standard tour in their home area
3. IPCOT volunteers for standard tour
4. COT volunteers for extended tour
5. COT, NCR volunteers, for a standard tour in their home area
6. COT volunteers for standard tours
7. Volunteers for extended tour in the CONUS and are in a mandatory PCS move situation
8. NCR volunteers for standard tour in home area and are in a mandatory PCS move situation
9. Volunteers for standard tour and are in a mandatory PCS move situation

10. Non-volunteers in a mandatory PCS move situation, that are vulnerable for involuntary OS PCS selection within 24 months

11. Volunteers in the CONUS for extended tour (by longest time on station)

12. NCRs in the CONUS who volunteer for a standard tour in their home area (by longest time on station)

13. Volunteers in the CONUS for standard tour (by longest time on station)

14. Non-volunteers in the CONUS

(There is further prioritization within each of these groups. Additional information is listed in AFI 36-2110, Table 6.)

Overseas Returnee Prioritization

Members returning from overseas are prioritized by category. Individuals return in one of three groups. The first group are those individuals serving an unaccompanied tour and the tour length is 17 months or less and dependents ARE restricted (member is not given the opportunity to take dependents). The second group are those individuals who serve the unaccompanied tour and the unaccompanied tour length is 17 months or less and dependents ARE NOT restricted or limited. The last group are the individuals that are serving on a tour of 18 months or more (regardless of the accompanied status).

Once the return category is determined, we then look at the number of credited short tours by group (not including current tour). In other words, whoever has the most short tours within a priority group would have priority. In addition to credited short tours, we also consider tour extensions within the same priority group. Tour extensions raise a member's priority within their priority group. These tour extensions need to be in increments of 6 months for short tours and 12 months for long tours. In the event of a tie within a priority group, we use grade, DOR, TAFMSD, to break it. Again, this is just a summary of the prioritization process and if you need more information see your MPF or Commander's Support Staff.

Force Structure Assignment Procedures

The base closure and force structure section (DPAAS1) at AFPC manages unique enlisted Air Force assignment

programs such as base closures, unit builds, and unit draw downs. Personnel affected by draw downs are provided assignment briefings from the MAJCOM or AFPC 12 to 23 months prior to the draw down effective date. To stabilize manning, personnel involved with force structure activities are deferred from reassignment with assignment availability codes (AACs) 36 or 54.

Personnel in AAC 36 must PCS or PCA upon expiration of their deferment. Because of their "must-move" status, AAC 36 personnel receive a one-time enhanced look (higher priority than other CONUS volunteers) at overseas assignments for reporting dates based on their availability date. After completion of the overseas cycle, CONUS requirements are offered to personnel by message or by an assignment team visit. Personnel compete for CONUS requirements based on their CAFSC, grade, and date of rank. AAC 54 is applied to personnel involved with initial builds or partial draw downs. PCS actions are not required for AAC 54 personnel.

Retrainee Assignments

The Air Force uses the retraining program to correct shortages and overages as a result of force structure changes, trained personnel requirements (TPR) changes, normal attrition, and manpower authorization changes. There are several airman retraining programs available and to find additional information about them you should contact your MPF Formal training unit. Any questions concerning any PCS reassignment in conjunction with retraining, should be directed to your MPF Relocations unit.

Notification of reassignment in conjunction with retraining will usually occur 120 days from class start date. There are situations where short notice notification of retraining is necessary (i.e. retaining is short notice and class start date is within 30 days) and in these cases retraining and assignment notification is provided by AFPC immediately to lessen any possible hardships. Notification by your MPF will usually occur within 3 days of receipt of AFPC notification message. If you are within 90 days of your projected class start date and haven't received assignment notification (PCS or PCA), you should contact your MPF as soon as possible so appropriate action can be taken.

Usually the reasons for the retraining (surpluses, force structure changes, trained personnel requirements) prevent us from keeping an individual overseas. It is essential, when possible, that airmen completing retraining to qualify in a new specialty are afforded

assignment stability to permit skill level upgrading at the earliest possible opportunity. That said, overseas assignments in conjunction with retraining are not usually provided unless you are retraining into an imbalanced AFSC (see also the FAQ on Imbalanced AFSCs). Furthermore, if you are overseas when you receive your notification of approved retraining, you will not participate for a retraining assignment under EQUAL. Your assignment will be provided out-of-cycle by AFPC. Under no circumstance will an involuntary consecutive overseas assignment be provided in conjunction with retraining or otherwise.

Additionally, for those individuals assigned in the CONUS, the first consideration for utilization in conjunction with retraining is locally. The reason for this is to save on PCS funds. If this cannot be accomplished, you will be reassigned to a location where the AF has the greatest need. There is no list of requirements to view because AF requirements with regard to retraining are changing constantly and numerous factors prevent us from providing a listing like we do through EQUAL. Reassignment based on your assignment preferences and retraining AFSC is considered, but it is secondary to Air Force needs.

The CAREERS (first term reenlistment) program permits first term airmen who are eligible to reenlist to request retraining into another Air Force specialty, if retraining requirements exist, upon reenlistment. First-term airmen retraining under CAREERS may request an in-place Base of Preference (BOP), a PCS BOP, or both. AFPC will only approve a PCS BOP if the retraining AFSC and manning requirements dictate or when retraining requires PCS to formal school (school duration is 20 weeks or greater). Consideration will be given to in-place preferences before PCS preferences, regardless of the order or priority listed. It is necessary for first termers who are retraining under CAREERS to extend their enlistment to the maximum of 23 months or reenlist. Your MPF can answer any questions you might have concerning this and other programs.

If you have any questions concerning these or any available retraining programs, the retraining process, or general procedures, they should be directed to your servicing MPF. Additional information concerning retraining can be found on this website at URL: <http://www.afpc.af.mil/retrain>